

Ministerial Council On Drug Strategy

COMMUNIQUÉ

25 February 2011

Ministers responsible for illegal and legal drugs met in Perth today to tackle some of the big issues facing governments and the community with regard to the harms caused by drugs and alcohol. The meeting was chaired by Helen Morton, Western Australian Minister for Mental Health; Disability Services, and was attended by representatives from all states and territories and the New Zealand government.

Some of the issues discussed included:

National Drug Strategy 2010-2015

Ministers today approved the *National Drug Strategy 2010-2015*. The Strategy is the result of an extensive consultation process that began in December 2009 with the release of a consultation paper and concluded in December 2010 with the close of comments on a draft of the Strategy.

The Strategy maintains the cooperative venture between the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments, as well as the non-government sector, to build safe and healthy communities by minimising alcohol, tobacco and other drug-related harms among individuals, families and communities.

It maintains the balanced approach between demand reduction, supply reduction and harm reduction that has underpinned the Strategy since its inception in 1985. The Strategy also continues the key partnership between health and law enforcement whilst acknowledging the importance of working with other sectors to address the complex causes and consequences of drug use.

The Strategy renews commitments to building workforce capacity, and evidence-based and evidence-informed practice. For the first time, it includes performance measures to provide broad measures of progress.

An electronic copy of the *National Drug Strategy 2010-2015* will be posted on the National Drug Strategy website by 11 March 2011 with hard copies available soon after.

Harmful alcohol use

Ministers noted the growing trend for alcohol to be mixed with energy drinks and the associated dangers of intoxication, dehydration and other health impacts, and the increased potential for risky behaviours, accidents and injury. Ministers tasked the Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs to develop an urgent plan for responding to this trend.

Ministers also noted with concern the increase in per capita consumption of alcohol in Australia associated with higher concentrations of alcohol in some products, and continuing concerns about the exposure of children to alcohol advertising, and requested the Australian National Preventive Health Agency to closely monitor these issues and recommend further action as appropriate.

Misuse of pharmaceutical drugs

Ministers discussed ongoing concerns about the diversion and misuse of pharmaceutical drugs and the associated costs and harms. Ministers approved additional funding for the development of the National Pharmaceutical Misuse Strategy.

Ministers also approved funding for the development of National Clinical Guidelines and Policy on Opioid Substitution Treatment.

Future oversight of the National Drug Strategy

Ministers noted that COAG had agreed on 13 February 2011 that the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy should not continue as a Council of COAG beyond 30 June 2011. Ministers emphasised an ongoing commitment to the work covered by the MCDS and discussed future governance arrangements to ensure it remained a high priority. Ministers agreed that for the future, the officials-level Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs should continue its work of coordinating Commonwealth, State and Territory efforts to implement the National Drug Strategy, and that relevant Ministers would meet on occasions when Ministerial-level policy decisions and direction were required.

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